



THRC NEWS

A newsletter of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission
Issue II, Fall 2011



Beverly L. Watts
Executive Director

WELCOME TO THE SECOND NEWSLETTER OF THE TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION! THE LEAVES FALLING REMIND ME THAT THE SEASONS CHANGE AND THAT CHANGE IS CONSTANT IN OUR LIVES. CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED AT THE COMMISSION OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. WE HAVE RELEASED OUR ANNUAL REPORT WHICH DETAILS ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE LAST FISCAL YEAR. THESE CHANGES HAVE BEEN A TEAM EFFORT AT IMPROVEMENT IN THE TIMELINESS AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE AGENCY, SEE THE ARTICLE IN THIS VOLUME FOR FULL DETAILS OF THE REPORT.

WE ARE ALSO EXPERIENCING A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP ON THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS. PATRICIA PIERCE, THE CURRENT THRC BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS CHAIR HAS SERVED THREE TERMS AND, ACCORDING TO THE BYLAWS, IS STEPPING DOWN. I WANT TO PERSONALLY THANK HER FOR HER LEADERSHIP, ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND GUIDANCE DURING HER TERM. WE ARE PLEASED THAT SHE CONTINUES TO SERVE ON THIS BOARD AS A COMMISSIONER. STACY GARRETT, OUR NEW CHAIR, HAS HELD LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ON THIS BODY AS LAW AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH HER IN HER NEW CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE BOARD.

WE ARE EXPERIENCING CHANGE AT THE STAFF LEVEL AS WELL. TIFFANY BAKER COX, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, WILL BE LEAVING THRC TO LEAD THE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY EQUITY DIVERSITY AND COMPLIANCE PROGRAM. WE ARE ALSO SAYING FAREWELL TO SETH YU, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL, WHO WILL BE RETURNING TO HIS HOMETOWN OF SHANGHAI, CHINA, WHERE HE AND HIS WIFE WILL BEGIN WORKING FOR A HEALTH CARE COMPANY. THEIR ROLES AT THE AGENCY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVEMENTS IN EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS. WE WILL MISS THEM. I THANK THEM FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP AND DEDICATION TO THE AGENCY AND WISH THEM WELL IN THEIR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

CHANGE MEANS NEW ADDITIONS AND NEW POSSIBILITIES.

Snapshot of the 2010-2011 Annual Report



THRC detailed the processes, challenges and successes of the last year from the agency's 2010-2011 Annual Report in front of a crowd of over 40 participants at the Tennessee NAACP State Convention, held on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro.

THRC Commissioners and staff presented the annual report to a engaged audience at the convention. The following is a brief overview of

the report as presented to the audience:

- ♦ *The Commission received and answered 10,893 calls from the public, which resulted in a total of 1,056 inquiries. Of these inquiries, 673 were accepted for investigation*
- ♦ *The Commission developed rules and regulations for the Title VI Compliance Program which were passed by the legislature and became effective February 13, 2011.*
- ♦ *The Legal Division reviewed over 600 cases, 450 investigative plans, 36 reconsiderations and found reasonable cause in six (6) cases.*
- ♦ *The Employment Division closed 602 cases; these cases were closed on an average of 248 days. The Housing Division closed 138 cases; these cases were closed on an average of 175 days.*
- ♦ *The Commission settled 144 claims of discrimination through settlements, conciliations and mediations for a*

total of \$501,966; non-monetary benefits included training on the law, reconsideration of an application for housing, letters of reference, removal of eviction records, job reinstatement, attorney's fees and promotions.

The Title VI Compliance Program Annual Report was also released at this event and fostered a number of Title VI related questions and issues from the meeting participants.

For the full version of both the agency and Title VI Compliance Program visit, www.tn.gov/humanrights.—



THRC IN THE COMMUNITY



Joint THRC & EEOC Outreach event— Pictured L to R— Paulette Wilson, EEOC; Deputy Director of EEOC District Office, Shirley Richardson; THRC Commissioner, Spencer Wiggins; Special Assistant Bobbie Porter; Deputy Director Tiffany Baker Cox



Celebrate Nashville 2011— L to R— Kalenta Bentley, THRC Investigator; Special Assistant Bobbie Porter; Julie Brinker, Church of Scientology Community Affairs Director



Annual Report Release/TN NAACP State Convention— THRC Chair Patricia Pierce and Dr. Charles Kimbrough of the Tennessee NAACP



Title VI Coordinator's Annual Training— Title VI Director, Marcus Thomas

Title VI Compliance is on the Move in Tennessee

By Marcus Thomas,
Title VI Compliance Program Director
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (FFA).

Federal financial assistance includes the following: 1) an award, contract or grant of money; 2) loans, below fair market value or subsidies; and 3) training. Title VI applies to any state department or agency that receives FFA.

Did you know that during FY July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010, 41 executive branch departments reported the receipt of federal funds totaling \$13,633,698,719 which represents 46%, or almost half, of Tennessee's 2009-2010 state budget of \$29,952,785,000? If you didn't, now you know.

Over the past two years, the Tennessee Human Rights Commission ("Commission") has been active in the development of compliance program rules, implementation plan guidelines, and statewide policy. Since 2009, the Commission has provided daily technical assistance and three training workshops concerning an overview of Title VI and the implementation plan guidelines.

As of October 1, 2011, we entered into our second year of reviewing implementation plans of the departments.

On October 26, 2011, the Commission initiated a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Working Group consisting of various executive branch departments that will work collectively to ensure that all Tennesseans have meaningful access to programs and activities.

The Commission intends to further its mission during the current fiscal year by beginning the implementation of a new compliance review process where we will conduct a review of each executive branch department that is a recipient of FFA.

The Commission's comprehensive approach to monitoring Title VI compliance statewide is a work in progress. As this program continues to evolve, we encourage input, observations and questions from the public because Title VI compliance is critical to ensuring that state government continues to receive federal funding for programs and activities that are provided to the citizens of Tennessee.

Inquiries and questions concerning Title VI compliance in Tennessee should be directed to M. J. Thomas, Title VI Compliance Program Director at (615) 532-4882.—

Did you know? THRC is on Facebook! We have joined in with dozens of other state agencies that have launched an official fan page on the popular social media website, Facebook. Through Facebook, agencies like THRC are able to promote services and engage citizens. We welcome you to like us and get up to the minute information on upcoming outreach events and need-to-know facts about human and civil rights in Tennessee. Find us at www.facebook.com/TNHumanRightsCommission.



Message from the Outgoing Chair of the Board



*Patricia Pierce
Chair, Tennessee Human Rights
Board of Commissioners*

It has been my distinct honor and pleasure to serve my third term as Chair of the Board of Commissioners. I am committed to the work of the Commission and have a unique and long history with agency. In 1973, I applied for a field representative position with the Tennessee Commission for Human Development, renamed later the Tennessee Human Rights Commission. When I was hired for the job, I received a letter from then Governor Winfield Dunn welcoming me to state government and reminding me that "we work for the taxpayers of the State of Tennessee, and it should be our primary goal to give them the very best service possible." I still have a copy of the July 1973 Commission Newsletter that

announced my appointment. One of the Commissioners who served during the time I worked with the Commission was Jocelyn Wurzburg, and I have had the privilege to work with her again these past four years as a colleague on the current Board of Commissioners. I recall her diligent work on drafting the Tennessee Human Rights Act which became a state law in 1978. I left the Commission in 1978 to work for Vanderbilt's Opportunity Development Center. For almost thirty-five years, a combination of my time at the Commission and Vanderbilt, I worked in the human rights field as an advocate for equity and diversity before I retired from Vanderbilt in 2007.

In March of 2005, I was approached by the governor's offices about serving on the Board of Commissioners. I was honored to be asked and was appointed to a six-year term as a Commissioner representing Middle Tennessee. When I retired from Vanderbilt and moved back to my hometown of Harriman, TN, I resigned from the Commission. Less than a year later, I received an appointment to fill a vacancy in East Tennessee and continue today as a Commissioner representing East Tennessee. I have witnessed the Commission experience some difficult times due to budget cuts and staff changes and

shortages, but the Commission prevailed and is functioning in an efficient and professional manner. The Outreach Program has expanded and the Commission's involvement with community groups and organizations has broadened our efforts to spread the message about the work of the Commission. The Employment Law Seminar is one of the best legal education programs for employers and attorneys in Tennessee. This year we were privileged to have David Lopez, General Counsel of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as our keynote speaker.

As the number of discrimination complaints continues to grow and the circumstances surrounding these complaints are incredible, the progress in eliminating discrimination in Tennessee seems minimal. Unfortunately, discrimination and prejudice still exist, but I believe the work of the Commission is crucial in winning the battle of eliminating unlawful actions and attitudes against people based on their race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or familial status. I have taken the pledge to stand against racism and all other forms of discrimination and encourage others to join me in supporting the work of the Commission to end discrimination in Tennessee.—

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